

>> or something, and she said, 'It's all full of Kentucky people every night. They are just wild.' They were spending the night there to go to their doctor's office the next morning and leave."

Kentucky's law to monitor prescription drugs, the Kentucky All Schedule Prescription Electronic Reporting system, better known as KASPER, was created in 1998 and serves throughout the country as a model for tracking would-be illegal prescription narcotic activity. But, several of our neighboring states — and those close by like Florida — are just now beginning to put together programs such as KASPER, said Carpenter.

"I think just because we have the best law and the best monitoring program, it pushed our people outside the state lines to get their drugs," she said. "Now that these other states are trying to step up and do something with their legislation, it is gearing these people back toward home. A lot of them stopped going to Florida, now they're going to Georgia. Now even Georgia is getting a prescription monitoring program in place. Now, I think the doctors are a little afraid there. So they are trying to follow the patients back to Kentucky. Because they have such a huge patient base in Kentucky, they don't want to lose our people."

As of late January, Carpenter said the attorney general's office was aware of at least a dozen pill mill clinics operating in the central and eastern parts of the state,

a number that is definitely on the rise.

West, who has been prosecuting prescription narcotic cases for more than a decade, said Kentucky drug seekers are especially fond of local pill mill operations because it makes their jobs so much easier.

"If a KASPER type program gets online in Florida, all that is going to do is stop them from doctor shopping down there," West said. "What has been the most significant impact is the local law enforcement down in Florida and Georgia who are arresting these people and locking them up. Just in the federal court, we have put anywhere from 50 to 100 people in prison who have been going back and forth from Kentucky to Florida. So, that's a red flag right there to the drug community. But if they stay locally, it doesn't raise a red flag. If they stay locally, they can drive to the next county to visit a doctor who's going to give them prescriptions. They can go underneath the radar pretty easily."

"They are filtering into Lexington, toward northern Kentucky and south of Lexington — that was unusual," he continued. "And they are going to continue to creep westward."

SHUTTING THEM DOWN

If investigators know where to find these pill mills and what to look for, it might seem questionable why they still exist. But, Carpenter and West agreed it's not that simple. >>

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